

PRACTICE TEST

**Civics**  
**State-Level**  
**Performance Task**  
**Grade 8**

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Student Name

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School Name

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District Name



# Grade 8 Civics State-Level Performance Task PRACTICE TEST

This practice test contains 11 questions.

**The following performance task focuses on the development of the U.S. Constitution.**

## **Directions**

Read each question carefully and then answer it as well as you can. You must record all answers in this Practice Test Booklet.

For some questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Practice Test Booklet. Make sure you darken the circles completely. Do not make any marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

If you do not know the answer to a question, you may go on to the next question. When you are finished, you may review your answers and go back to any questions you did not answer in this session only.

- 1 Part of the Declaration of Independence is shown.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . .

Which of the following is this statement **best** interpreted to mean today?

- Ⓐ All Americans have the same legal rights.
- Ⓑ All Americans have the same job opportunities.
- Ⓒ All Americans have the same unlimited freedoms.
- Ⓓ All Americans have the same civic responsibilities.

**Read and examine the source. Then answer questions 2–4.**

The Articles of Confederation were the nation’s first constitution. The Articles of Confederation had weaknesses, which led to protests that became known as Shays’ Rebellion. The following text is an excerpt from a letter that James Madison wrote about Shays’ Rebellion in 1787.

Dear Sir,

[From] the newspapers . . . you will have learnt that [Shays’ Rebellion is over]. It appears however that . . . the government of Massachusetts considers very strong precautions<sup>1</sup> as necessary against further eruptions.<sup>2</sup> . . .

The only step . . . taken by Congress since my arrival has been a recommendation of the proposed meeting in May for revising the federal articles. . . .

Indeed the present system<sup>3</sup> neither has nor deserves advocates;<sup>4</sup> and if some very strong [changes] are not applied will quickly tumble to the ground. No money is paid into the public treasury; no respect is paid to the federal authority. Not a single state complies. . . . The payments ever since the peace have been decreasing. . . . It is not possible that a government can last long under these circumstances.

<sup>1</sup>precautions—actions taken to avoid danger

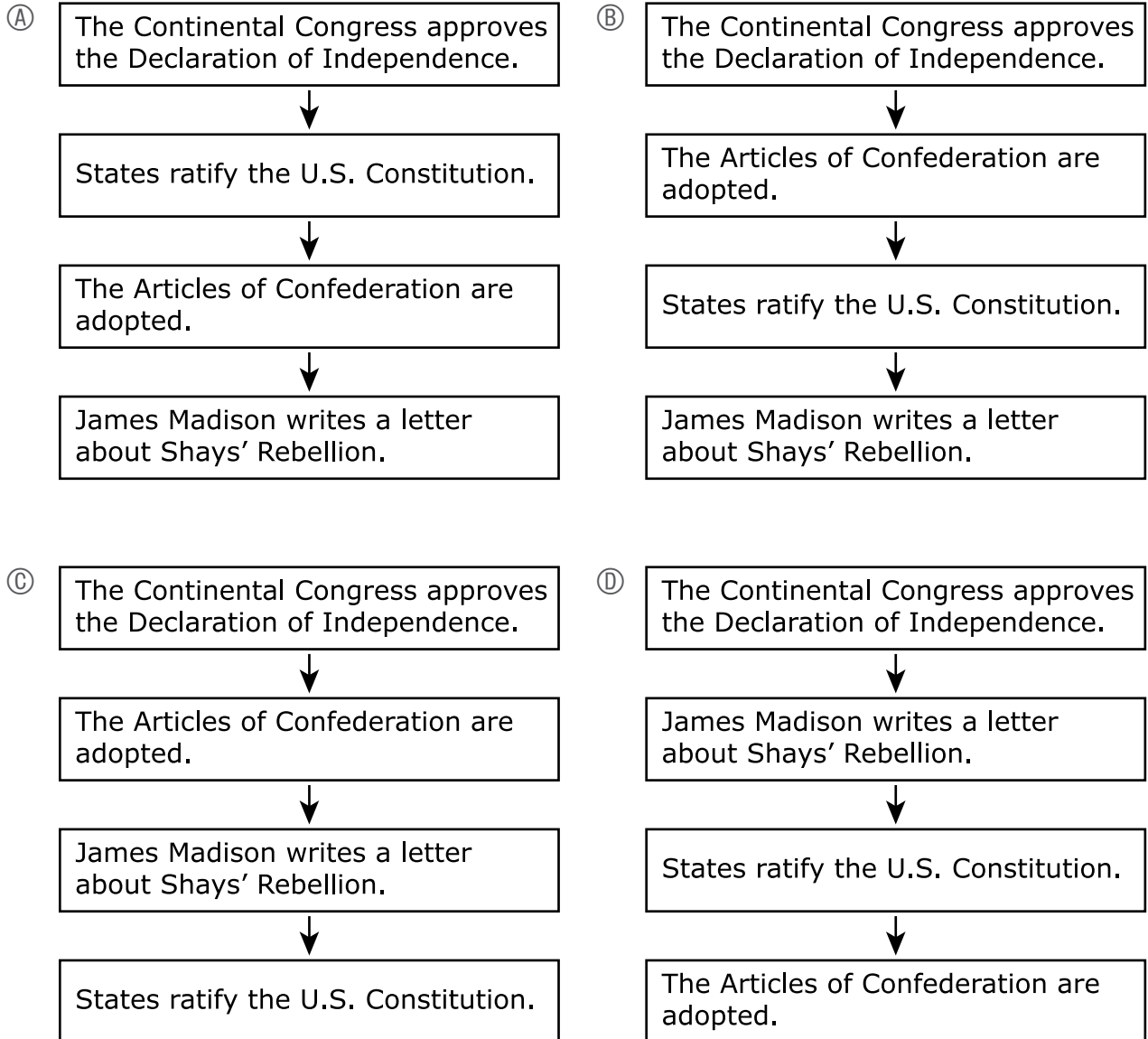
<sup>2</sup>eruptions—unrest

<sup>3</sup>system—government

<sup>4</sup>advocates—supporters

- 2 Many important events in U.S. history took place around the time that James Madison wrote his letter.

Which timeline shows the correct order in which the events took place?



**3** Which of the following describes one purpose of the Articles of Confederation?

- Ⓐ to form a union of states
- Ⓑ to establish state governments
- Ⓒ to expand the powers of the British government
- Ⓓ to increase the amount of taxes paid by farmers

**4** Based on the source and your knowledge of civics, describe one weakness of the government under the Articles of Confederation.

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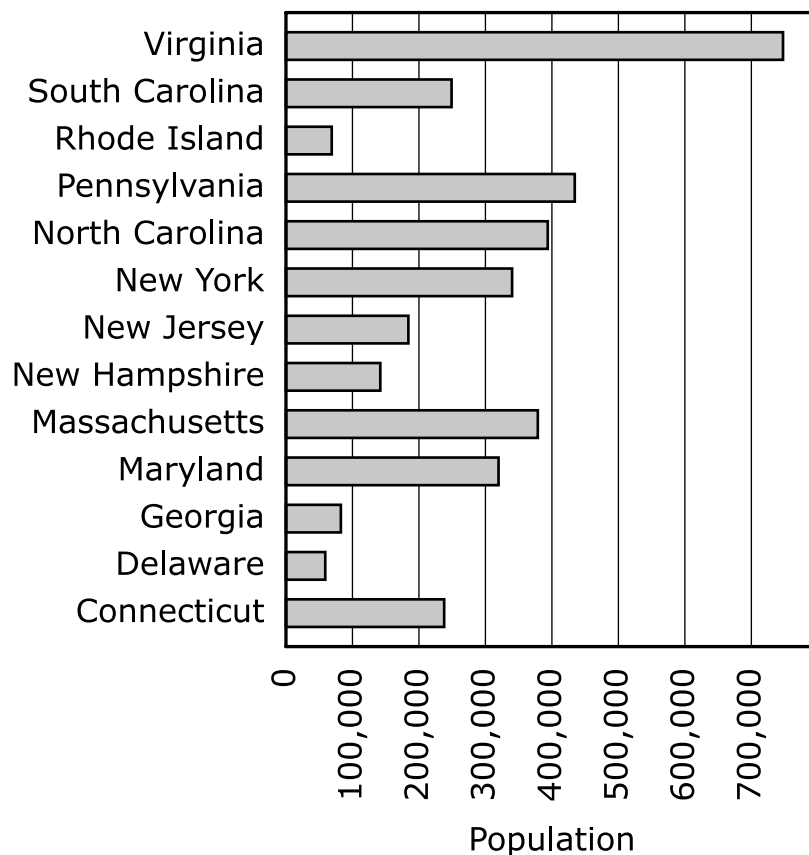
**Read and examine the source. Then answer questions 5–7.**

The following text describes a conflict about congressional representation during the Constitutional Convention.

Twelve of the original thirteen states sent delegates to the Constitutional Convention. The states disagreed over representation in the federal government. Two states introduced plans to solve this conflict. The Virginia Plan proposed representation based on the total population of each state. The New Jersey Plan proposed equal representation for each state.

The following graph shows the total population for each of the original thirteen states as recorded in the 1790 U.S. Census.

**U.S. Population by State, 1790**





- 5 Based on the source, which of the following questions were the delegates to the Constitutional Convention trying to resolve when they proposed the Virginia and New Jersey plans?
- (A) How will states join the new government?
  - (B) How will states choose leaders for local legislatures?
  - (C) How will citizens participate in creating new national laws?
  - (D) How will the government resolve problems between two states?
- 6 During the Constitutional Convention, states voted on the Virginia and the New Jersey plans.

Based on the text and the graph, which pair of states most likely supported the **Virginia Plan** at the Constitutional Convention?

- (A) Delaware and Massachusetts
- (B) Delaware and New Hampshire
- (C) Massachusetts and Pennsylvania
- (D) New Hampshire and Pennsylvania

Based on the text and the graph, which pair of states most likely supported the **New Jersey Plan** at the Constitutional Convention?

- (A) Pennsylvania and Delaware
- (B) Delaware and New Hampshire
- (C) Massachusetts and Pennsylvania
- (D) New Hampshire and Massachusetts

**7** Delegates from North Carolina supported the Virginia Plan. Explain one reason why the state most likely supported that plan. Include data from the graph to support your reasoning.

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**Read and examine the source. Then answer questions 8–10.**

During the development of the U.S. Constitution, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists disagreed about federalism. Each group wrote several essays about the issue.

The following text is a modified version of an essay written in 1788 describing the Federalist position on federalism.

**Federalist Essay (Modified)**

The primary purpose of government is the people’s happiness, therefore only a government that promotes that happiness is legitimate.<sup>1</sup> To promote this happiness, the U.S. Constitution divides power between the state and national governments. State governments are closer to the people and have undefined powers that focus on the welfare of the people, while the national government has clear, defined powers that focus on external issues. This division of power is called federalism. Although some may fear that this federal system may lead to problems, the federal system prevents this because the states will retain their own powers. In other words, the national government cannot operate without the state governments, while the state governments gain major benefits from the national government.

The following text is a modified version of an essay written in 1787 describing the Anti-Federalist position on federalism.

**Anti-Federalist Essay (Modified)**

The new constitution as written will cause the dissolution<sup>2</sup> of states to form one great republic. The thirteen states should maintain their autonomy<sup>3</sup> but allow for their organization by a national government. However, a central government that is created by the constitution would be too powerful, creating laws and decisions that will make the state governments unnecessary. The new country is rapidly growing in both size and population, which can lead to tyrannical leaders. To protect the people, state governments need to maintain their power.

<sup>1</sup>legitimate—valid

<sup>2</sup>dissolution—breaking up

<sup>3</sup>autonomy—self-government

- 8 Which of the following would the author of the Anti-Federalist essay **most likely** support?
- Ⓐ The federal government should control courthouses.
  - Ⓑ State governments should control private businesses.
  - Ⓒ The federal government should be responsible for education.
  - Ⓓ State governments should be responsible for collecting taxes.
- 9 Which of the following changes to the Constitution did the Federalists propose to help convince the Anti-Federalists to ratify the document?
- Ⓐ allowing states to veto national laws
  - Ⓑ adding protections for individual rights
  - Ⓒ allowing the federal government to create new states
  - Ⓓ adding a judicial branch to state and local governments

**10** Describe one difference between the Federalist and the Anti-Federalist positions expressed in the essays. Explain your reasoning.

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**Reread the following sources from earlier in the test. Then answer question 11.**

## Source 1

The Articles of Confederation were the nation's first constitution. The Articles of Confederation had weaknesses, which led to protests that became known as Shays' Rebellion. The following text is an excerpt from a letter that James Madison wrote about Shays' Rebellion in 1787.

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<sup>1</sup>precautions—actions taken to avoid danger

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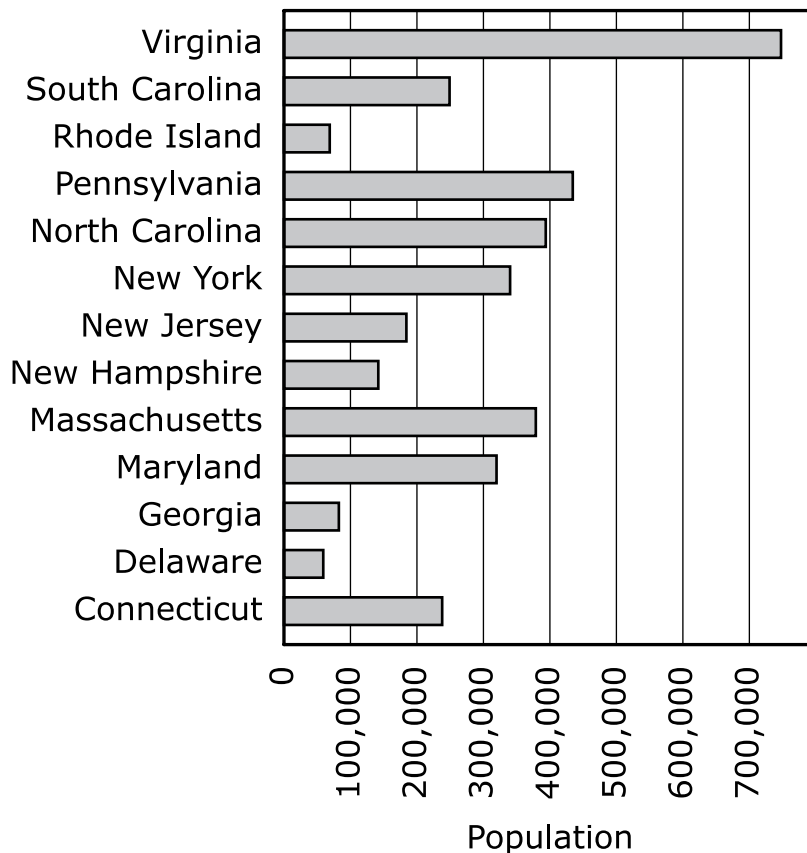
Source 2

The following text describes a conflict about congressional representation during the Constitutional Convention.

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The following graph shows the total population for each of the original thirteen states as recorded in the 1790 U.S. Census.

**U.S. Population by State, 1790**



## Source 3

During the development of the U.S. Constitution, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists disagreed about federalism. Each group wrote several essays about the issue.

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### **Federalist Essay (Modified)**

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### **Anti-Federalist Essay (Modified)**

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<sup>1</sup>legitimate—valid

<sup>2</sup>dissolution—breaking up

<sup>3</sup>autonomy—self-government



**This question has four parts. Write your response on the next page. Be sure to label each part of your response.**

- 11** Delegates that attended the Constitutional Convention disagreed about how the U.S. government should be structured. These disagreements forced the delegates to compromise on several issues.
- A. Based on the sources, describe one compromise the delegates made during the Constitutional Convention.
  - B. Explain how the compromise you described in Part A strengthened the U.S. Constitution. Use information from one of the sources to support your reasoning.
  - C. Based on the sources, describe **another** compromise the delegates made during the Constitutional Convention.
  - D. Explain how the compromise you described in Part C strengthened the U.S. Constitution. Use information from one of the sources to support your reasoning.

